

COGNITIVE DISPOSITIONS

Supporting Thinking & Mindfulness

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Cultivating awareness in oneself and others is a dynamic process that blends mindfulness, self-reflection, active listening, and intentional action. Developing awareness is a continuous journey that calls for dedication, empathy, and an open mindset. To effectively support the thought processes of others, individuals must consciously set aside personal biases and recognize any unproductive habits in how they listen and respond. The five key dispositions—efficacy, skill, adaptability, awareness, and interdependence—play a crucial role in shaping the performance and cohesion of both individuals and teams.

SHIFT FROM...	MINDSETS	SHIFT TO...
A belief that external forces have the control	EFFICACY Belief: "I/we can do it"	A belief that the locus of control is within the stakeholder(s)
A false sense of proficiency or operating with imprecision	SKILL Proficiency: "I know my/our proficiency in relation to a standard."	An understanding of proficiency and acting with skill and elegance
A narrow and/or egocentric viewpoint	ADAPTABILITY Flexibility: "I/we see things from various perspectives"	An ability to see things from multiple viewpoints
A lack of consciousness related to the impact on others or the system	AWARENESS Consciousness "I/We know the impact I/we are having on others?"	An understanding of how oneself is impacting others and the whole
An egocentric mindset focused on separateness and isolation	INTERDEPENDENCE Me vs. We "I/We are working toward a common goal"	An macro-centric mindset focused collaboration

GOING DEEPER: Cognitive Dispositions

EFFICACY—Belief: "I/we can do it"

Efficacy is the recognition of one's ability to make a meaningful difference, coupled with the willingness and readiness to take action. As a cornerstone of Dispositions, efficacy fuels motivation, hope, and the confidence that one can impact and transform the world around them. It drives effort and achievement, fosters openness to new ideas, and cultivates resilience in the face of challenges. Ultimately, efficacy nurtures the belief that success is not only possible but inevitable with perseverance and determination.

SKILL— Proficiency: “I know my/our proficiency in relation to a standard.”

Skill embodies the relentless pursuit of precision, refinement, and mastery. It reflects a commitment to excellence, characterized by the drive to enhance critical thinking and achieve superior standards both personally and collectively. Those with a high degree of skill rigorously evaluate their actions against clear criteria for success, analyze outcomes based on evidence, and dedicate themselves to continuously raising the bar of achievement. This mindset fosters a deep focus on improvement and the attainment of higher levels of excellence.

ADAPTABILITY— Flexibility: “I/we see things from various perspectives”

Flexibility is the ability to recognize and develop a range of options while demonstrating respect and empathy for diverse perspectives. It challenges individuals to move beyond egocentric thinking, fostering openness to the viewpoints of others and an appreciation for both their similarities and differences. Flexibility serves as the foundation for creativity and effective problem-solving, enabling individuals to explore alternatives and embrace new possibilities.

AWARENESS— Consciousness “I/We know the impact I/we are having on others?”

Consciousness involves actively monitoring one's own values, intentions, thoughts, and behaviors, along with their effects. It is a state of self-awareness that enables deeper exploration of other dispositions. By attentively examining their own listening, individuals can uncover biases that may distort their understanding. They reflect on whether their reasoning is logical and consider how prior knowledge influences their thought processes (Ellison & Hayes, 2012). This self-awareness also prompts them to question the judgments they make and explore alternative perspectives on a problem.

INTERDEPENDENCE— Me vs. We “I/We are working toward a common goal”

Interdependence emphasizes contributing to the common good and leveraging group resources to enhance personal effectiveness. It moves individuals beyond self-centeredness, encouraging them to view themselves as integral parts of something much larger. This shift progresses from self-centered thinking to other-centered and ultimately system-centered awareness. Interdependence fosters the understanding that we exist in a relational world, not in isolation. It reinforces the notion that “no one is an island,” highlighting the reciprocal exchange of resources within a system—where individuals both contribute to and benefit from the collective whole.

INVITING A SHIFT In COGNITION: Questioning

Cognitive shift occurs when a person has a breakthrough in his/her thinking; it is a moment of incredible insight. It is the goal of the coach to invite the cognitive shift. Artfully asked questions around the Cognitive Dispositions can also cause an individual or group to shift thinking and can be used to intervene when conflict occurs.

COGNITIVE DISPOSITION	QUESTIONS TO SHIFT DISPOSITION
EFFICACY Belief: "I/we can do it"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How have you dealt with similar situations in the past? • What might be some things you do have control of? • What are some resources you have, in yourself, that will serve you in responding to this situation? • What might be some of your options?
SKILL Proficiency: "I know my/our proficiency in relation to a standard."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What data will serve you in judging your performance? • What specific actions and steps might be critical in your decision-making? • Given your knowledge of the research base in this area, what are the most important things you might consider? • How might you find out more about that?
ADAPTABILITY Flexibility: "I/we see things from various perspectives"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What might be some other viewpoints on this issue? • What long-range effects might this have? • As you consider those you work with, what needs might be most prevalent for them? • Given those details, what might be the larger goal?
AWARENESS Consciousness "I/We know the impact I/we are having on others?"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did you decide to...? • What do you know about yourself in situations like this? • How do your past experiences influence your thinking in this time? • What makes this important to you? • What are some patterns you are noticing?
INTERDEPENDENCE Me vs. We "I/We are working toward a common goal"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How might others support you in this work? • What are some common goals you share? • When you work best together, what is happening? • What might be in it for both of you?

STRATEGIES: Supporting Awareness in Others

- Model what you hope to see in others and they will follow: Demonstrate present-moment awareness through your own actions and behavior. By doing this people will begin to mirror your language and patterns of interaction.
- Actively listen to and align responses: Practice listening deeply without interrupting or judging. This encourages others to express themselves fully and helps them become more attuned to their own thoughts and feelings.
- Ask reflective questions to get others thinking: Encourage self-awareness in others by asking open-ended questions that invite them to think about their experiences, motivations, and emotions.
- Create an environment that is safe to take risks and challenge thinking: Foster an environment where others feel comfortable exploring their thoughts and emotions. Non-judgmental, empathetic communication helps people feel supported, listened to, and open to self-reflection.

- Encourage reflection to promote self-directedness: Promote practices like journaling, meditation, goal setting, or simple pauses in daily routines to check in with their emotions, thoughts, goals, and experiences.
- Provide and engage constructive feedback cycles to raise consciousness related to dispositions: Give feedback that encourages self-awareness. Rather than simply pointing out mistakes, highlight opportunities for growth and improvement.

References

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